



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

Chambers of
J. Mark Coulson
U.S. Magistrate Judge

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October 7, 2025

LETTER TO COUNSEL

ORDER SCHEDULING SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE

RE: *In the Matter of the Petition of Grace Ocean Private Limited et al for
Exoneration from or Limitation of Liability*
Civil Case No.: 1:24-cv-00941-JKB

Dear Counsel:

The above referenced case has been referred to me to conduct a settlement conference. Based on your communications with Chambers' staff, I understand all necessary participants are available on **Monday, November 3, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., and that it is your choice to appear in- person. Please forward to my Chambers as soon as possible the names of the attendees so that we can reserve the appropriate space. Also let me know who will be attending by telephone. You will be notified prior to the conference if it will be in a courtroom or my chambers, which will depend on the number of participants.** Please review this letter carefully, as it is an Order of the Court that establishes certain prerequisites that must be fulfilled prior to the commencement of the settlement conference.

It is essential that the parties, or in the case of a corporation, partnership, or government entity, a representative, with complete authority to enter into a binding settlement, be present in person. A person with "complete authority" is someone who has the experience and judgment to exercise that authority without having to consult with anyone who is not in attendance at the settlement conference. Please note that non-parties (other than counsel) should not attend the conference absent prior approval from opposing counsel and the Court. Additionally, because of limited space, the Court cannot accommodate minor children who are not parties to the case. Attendance by the attorney for a party is not sufficient. Please also be advised that the conference should conclude by **4:00 p.m.**, and all those in attendance should plan accordingly.

Northern Division • 4228 U.S. Courthouse • 101 W. Lombard Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201 • 410-962-2600

Southern Division • 200 U.S. Courthouse • 6500 Cherrywood Lane • Greenbelt, Maryland 20770 • 301-344-0660

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I would like to receive a short *ex parte* letter by email (mdd_jmcchambers@mdd.uscourts.gov) **October 20, 2025**. The *ex parte* letter should NOT EXCEED FIVE PAGES, from each party and should candidly set forth the following:

- (1) facts you believe you can prove at trial;
- (2) the major weaknesses in each side's case, both factual and legal;
- (3) reference to any pending dispositive or other motions that would have a significant effect on settlement for the Court to review prior to settlement (please include a copy of the motion(s) and the docket number(s) and highlight and tab the relevant portions);
- (4) the history of any settlement negotiations to date; and
- (5) estimate of attorneys' fees and costs of litigation through trial.

The letters may be submitted *ex parte* and will be solely for my use in preparing for the settlement conference. I also will review select pleadings in the court file. Additionally, if you want me to review any case authorities that you believe are critical to your evaluation of the case, please identify. If you want me to review any exhibits or deposition excerpts, please attach a copy to your letter by email. A paper copy of all attachments exceeding 25 pages should be mailed or hand delivered to chambers.

Since settlement conferences are often more productive if the parties have previously exchanged demands and offers and have made a good faith effort to settle the case on their own, I require that the plaintiff submit a written itemization of damages and a settlement demand to the defendant no later than one month prior to the settlement conference. The defendant shall submit a written offer to the plaintiff and any alternate itemization of damages within one week of receiving the demand or no later than three weeks prior to the settlement conference, whichever is later. Thereafter, the parties should continue to engage in negotiations. The correspondence between the parties shall be included with the *ex parte* letters submitted to the Court.

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION MAY RESULT IN THE IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS

If counsel believes that a telephone conference prior to **November 3, 2025**, would make the settlement conference more productive, please contact my judicial assistant, Debbie Wengert-Rippetoe (Deborah.Wengert-Rippetoe@mdd.uscourts.gov), to make arrangements.

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The settlement conference process will be confidential, and disclosure of confidential dispute resolution communications is prohibited. See 28 U.S.C. § 652(d); Local Rule 607.4.

Notwithstanding the informal nature of this letter, it is an Order of the Court and the Clerk is directed to docket it as such.

I look forward to seeing you on **November 3, 2025**.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Mark Coulson', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

J. Mark Coulson
United States Magistrate Judge

cc: Court File
The Honorable James K. Bredar